



RICHARD CONDON'S latest novel, "Winter Kills," has just been published in paperback. The novel's plot bears more than passing resemblance to the Kennedy assassination.

Novel bears similarities to assassination of JFK

By PHIL STOREY
Collegian Staff Writer
Winter Kills. By Richard Condon
Dell Publishing Co., Inc. 332 pages. \$1.75 list price.

Nick Thirkield is looking for the person behind his brother's assassination. His brother was president of the United States and he was murdered 14 years ago.

Such is the plot behind "Winter Kills," suspense writer Richard Condon's latest offering. The author uses flashbacks to a good advantage, sneaking a look back to events that led up to the assassination and jumping forward to the post-killing investigation.

In "Winter Kills," Condon puts together a chain of events in which each link dissolves — no, explodes — what had been established as fact in the previous link. Clues are scarce and evidence disappears. Six people and a cat are killed before the novel's end.

The novel opens with the discovery, 14 years later, that more than one gunman was used in the assassination. Sound familiar? There are enough similarities between John F. Kennedy's death and the plot of "Winter Kills" that Kennedy remains a ghost between the lines, constantly reminding the reader of the real thing.

Condon's characterization

Review

of Thirkield is the strongest of the book. Thirkield is the avenger — and a fitting one. When he can't think his way out of a scrape, he has enough muscle to hit back. He never liked his brother but feels an obligation to unearth conspiracy. He plays the piano at quiet moments and makes love like the male counterpart of the "Happy Hooker."

All other characters in the novel rarely rise above the shallowness of their

stereotypes — the best buddy and business consultant all rolled into one, the domineering father, the woman Thirkield loves but who refuses to marry him, the sexy female reporter, crooked policemen, seamy underworld types, a homosexual bar owner, a Chinese cook and, yes, even a mad professor.

The strong point of "Winter Kills" is the plot, which keeps the reader bouncing like a pinball. Several solutions to the mystery are offered but each one is meticulously picked apart, making surprising new passageways in an already suspense-wrought maze.

The true solution, as in all good suspense yarns, is left for the last chapter. The book's ending not only leaves the reader gasping but presents a symbolic warning against all that is corrupt in American politics.

Christmas concert

The Penn State Glee Club and Brass Chorale will present a "Christmas in the Colonies" concert 8:30 p.m. tomorrow and 3:30 p.m. Sunday in Schwab.

The programs will feature Christmas music from the Revolutionary period, in-

cluding works by American composers Billings, Belcher and Flag.

The group also will perform Old English carols, with a special performance of "The Wassail Song" by 12 selected members of the Glee Club. The concert is free.

True pot-smuggling tale provides light diversion

By BRIAN MILLER
Collegian Staff Writer
Weed. By Jerry Kamstra. 276 pages.
Bantam Books Y2315. \$1.95 list price.

On the front cover of the paperback version of "Weed," the publisher has printed these eye-catching phrases: "The hair-raising exploits of a daring gringo deep in the heart of Mexico," and "illustrated with 32 pages of exhilarating photos of a ton of grass by Eugene Anthony."

Now come on — "hair-raising?" "Weed" is in fact adventure story but don't get the idea that it has the "thrill of a Hemingway adventure" as reviewed by "Human Behavior." And those 32 pages of "exhilarating" photos are all black-and-white shots, many out of focus and taken in poor light.

Yet Jerry Kamstra's "Weed" isn't without merit. Make tracks to the Thrifty Bottle Shop Open Sundays Behind The Train Station

Kamstra, a former smuggler and Big Sur dropout, does spin an interesting tale of his exploits with dope and Mexico. Kamstra also finds time to philosophize on the current state of affairs south of the border as well as giving the traveling head a good road map of where to go and not to go in Mexico.

to the Mexican "mota" fields. Kamstra after making the connections for the pot information soon makes connections for the pot itself, and gives a first hand account thereafter of smuggling a ton of weed from the Mexican mountains to the journey's end, San Francisco.

"Weed" is divided into four parts, the "Border," the "Road," the "Mountains" and the "Coast." The "hair-raising adventures" take place in the "Mountain" and "Coast" sections, although you know from the start that Kamstra and his smuggling buddies make it, so the suspense is really minimal. The "Road" section of the book is Jerry's chance to basically bullshit on everything under the sun and he does.

But Kamstra is a good bullshitter and the book has some excellent material, some very funny — especially when Kamstra tells of his at-the-border bust in the mid 60s — and some quite informative. Kamstra gives you a very detailed insight into the workings of the dope industry. (The glossary in the back of the book is very well done.)

Don't judge "Weed" in the paperback form by its cover. It doesn't match the billing. But it's worthwhile reading, valuable even for the non-smokers in our presence.

book review

My major gripe with Kamstra is that he may have tried to put too much in 276 pages. Several times, Kamstra will stop one line of thought and jump into "which reminds me of the time..." and lead the reader down a related yet off the path trail of a past dope and/or Mexican experience.

The book basically outlines Kamstra's efforts to photograph and catalog a trip

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Tickets on sale at the HUB desk beginning Monday, Dec. 15, 1975 at 9:00 a.m. Buy your ticket early & reserve your seat. So save yourself a couple of dollars and a walk to the bus terminal... ride the USG Christmas break express.

For more information call USG at 953-0299.

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